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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH NEW SECURITY  
COUNCIL CHAIR TAZHIN

REF: ASTANA 37

Classified By: Amb. John Ordway, reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (S) Summary: During his first meeting with Marat Tazhin in his new position of Secretary of the Security Council, the Ambassador reviewed bilateral security cooperation efforts. He noted that counterterrorism cooperation with the KNB appeared to be back on track, DOD and MOD were engaged in a five-year cooperation plan, and the FBI and MVD were working well together on the Sarsenbaiuly murder investigation. The Ambassador also reviewed areas that will likely be discussed during the Vice President's May 5 meeting with President Nazarbayev in Astana, including improved coordination of Caspian security efforts and expanded cooperation through the Proliferation Security Initiative. Tazhin, noting that he was still trying to understand his own role, said that his first task would be to focus the subject matter for the Vice President's upcoming visit. He said that his initial interagency meetings on security issues had given him the impression that mil-to-mil cooperation with the U.S. was going quite well; the main question Kazakhstan faced was whether to adopt Russian or NATO technical standards, or some combination. Tazhin also positively assessed bilateral counterterrorism efforts, and expressed an interest in learning more about how the U.S. intelligence community is structured to facilitate information sharing, as well as about the Congressional oversight role. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) In an April 18 meeting with the Ambassador, newly appointed Secretary of the Security Council Marat Tazhin noted that he was assuming the position for the third time in his career. Tazhin, appointed most recently on April 13 to replace Bulat Utemuratov, held the same job February 1999-May 2001 and December 2001-April 2002. He told the Ambassador that his primary focus would be on security issues involving the MVD, KNB, and MOD.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador told Tazhin that he hoped he would not forget our joint efforts to move forward on democratization. He noted that U.S.-Kazakhstani cooperation is excellent in the area of security. Although there had been a slight pause in cooperation with the KNB following Dutbayev's departure, the Ambassador said, it looked like things were now back on track. The Ambassador reminded Tazhin that the U.S. has a five-year military cooperation plan with MOD, and the FBI is working well with the MVD on the Sarsenbaiuly investigation. The Ambassador briefed Tazhin on the U.S. role, noting that while there is no doubt about the involvement of the ten suspects now in custody, further investigation was needed to determine if others were involved.

¶4. (S) The Ambassador briefly reviewed the list of areas of

cooperation that A/S Boucher had discussed with counterparts during his recent visit (reftel), highlighting Caspian security as an area that needed particular consideration. The Ambassador told Tazhin that it appeared that better coordination of existing efforts was needed, and asked for Tazhin's thoughts on what type of coordination mechanism might be useful. The Ambassador noted that President Nazarbayev during a recent visit had raised the idea of concluding an agreement on security cooperation in the Caspian. (Note: In a separate April 18 meeting, PA legal department head Berik Imashev stressed that Tazhin had the lead on this issue. He nonetheless offered his personal suggestion that the Ministry of Emergency Situations be involved in any coordination mechanism, as it would be involved in responding to any chem, bio, or nuclear events in the Caspian region. He also commented that that the involvement of MES would underscore the civil aspect of cooperation and prevent the impression of "militarization" of the Caspian. End note.)

15. (S) U/S Joseph had discussed expanding U.S.-Kazakhstani cooperation within the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) during his October meeting with President Nazarbayev, the Ambassador noted. The U.S. was most concerned about the route between North Korea and Iran, where Kazakhstan was particularly well-placed to assist with interdictions. We needed to work out information exchange channels. The Ambassador noted that Tazhin's predecessor Utemuratov had been our designated POC on PSI issues.

16. (C) Tazhin said that as he had just moved to the Security Council, he was still trying to understand his role. He expressed optimism that he would be able to continue his close cooperation with the U.S. in his new position, and said

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one of his first priorities would be to focus on the subject matter for the Vice President's meeting with President Nazarbayev. In response to Tazhin's question about the prospects for a Nazarbayev visit to Washington, the Ambassador explained that we were looking for a date in the fall that would not conflict with UNGA or with the Kazakhstani world religions conference.

17. (C) Tazhin said that he had spoken to Defense Minister Altynbayev the day before regarding military cooperation with the U.S. He came away with the impression that there is good, stable contact between the MOD and DOD. The MOD's budget is rising, which will permit the continued modernization of equipment. The main question Kazakhstan faced was of military-technical standards: should they move completely to Russian or NATO standards, or some combination? The question had implications both for future interoperability as well as for purchase, repair, and upgrade costs. The Ambassador noted that the modernization process had already begun with the acquisition of Humvees from the U.S. and the order for Huey helicopters.

18. (S) Tazhin said the other main question on the bilateral agenda is counterterrorism efforts. He had attended an interagency meeting the day before on the subject, which had concluded that there were no significant problems and that information exchange was good. There has been particular success in joint tracking of terrorist groups in Kazakhstan. Tazhin commented that the U.S. intelligence community has a good information sharing structure as well as clear Congressional oversight mechanisms, two areas he would like to see improved in Kazakhstan. The Ambassador explained the role of the Director of National Intelligence, and offered to help arrange separate meetings for Tazhin on these types of organizational issues if he accompanied Nazarbayev to Washington in the fall.

ORDWAY